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WERNETH LOW COUNTRY PARK JOINT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Day: Wednesday
Date: 14 June 2023
Time: 10.30 am
Place: Lower Higham Visitor Centre - Werneth Low Country Park

Item No.	AGENDA	Page No
1.	APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE To receive any apologies for the meeting from Members of the Joint Committee.	
2.	DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST To receive any declarations of interest from Members of the Joint Committee.	
3.	MINUTES The Minutes of the proceedings of the previous meeting of the Werneth Low Country Park Joint Management Committee held on 22 February 2023 to be approved as a correct record.	1 - 4
4.	MEMBERSHIP OF THE JOINT COMMITTEE 2023/24 Tameside MBC Councillors Bowden, Fitzpatrick, Kitchen, Owen, Robinson, Roderick and Colbourne. Hyde War Memorial Trust Messrs Ainger, Bell, Mrs Durkin, Mrs Ellis and Ms Halliday	
5.	APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR AND DEPUTY CHAIR FOR 2023/24 In accordance with the decision taken at the meeting of the Joint Management Committee held on 5 August 1986, the offices of Chair and Deputy Chair are held in rotation by a member of each of the constituent bodies. The Committee should in respect of this Municipal Year 2023/24, select the Chair from Tameside MBC and the Deputy Chair from Hyde War Memorial Trust.	
6.	WERNETH LOW COUNTRY PARK JOINT MANAGEMENT AGREEMENT UPDATE To consider a report of the Greenspace Development Manager.	5 - 6

From: Democratic Services Unit – any further information may be obtained from the reporting officer or from Charlotte Forrest, Senior Democratic Services Officer, charlotte.forrest@tameside.gov.uk or 016 342 2346, to whom any apologies for absence should be notified.

Item No.	AGENDA	Page No
7.	GREENSPACE DEVELOPMENT OFFICER'S REPORT To consider the report of the Greenspace Development Officer.	7 - 12
8.	DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS To note the dates of future meetings to be held on:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="300 371 571 400">• 11 October 2023<li data-bbox="300 407 584 436">• 21 February 2024	

From: Democratic Services Unit – any further information may be obtained from the reporting officer or from Charlotte Forrest, Senior Democratic Services Officer, charlotte.forrest@tameside.gov.uk or 016 342 2346, to whom any apologies for absence should be notified.

Agenda Item 3.

WERNETH LOW COUNTRY PARK JOINT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

22 February 2023

Commenced: 10.30 am

Terminated: 11.45 am

Present: Mrs Durkin (Chair), Councillors Robinson (Deputy Chair) and Roderick, Mr Bell and Mrs Ellis

In Attendance: Nicola Marshall Greenspace Development Manager
Katie Lowry Greenspace Development Officer

Apologies for Absence: Councillors Bowden, Cooper, Kitchen, Owen, Colbourne, Mr Ainger and Ms Halliday

8. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

9. MINUTES

The Minutes of the Werneth Low Country Park Joint Management Committee held on 30 November 2022 were agreed as a correct record.

10. GREENSPACE DEVELOPMENT OFFICER'S REPORT

The Greenspace Development Officer submitted a report informing members of the activities undertaken within the Country Park since the last meeting of the Joint Management Committee.

The report outlined the following:-

- Maintenance of Sites
- Public Events
- The Lower Higham Visitor Centre
- Werneth Low Country Park Greenspace Volunteer Service

With regards to Maintenance of Sites it was reported that the Greenspace Development Officer had recently received 'Off Road Driver' training in January 2023 that had provided the skills to help minimise the impact of the vehicle when it was necessary to drive off road on the country park's sensitive ground, which was kept to a minimum. The Greenspace Development Officer had rebuilt a dry stone wall at the pedestrian entrance to Quarry car park after it had been knocked down during a road traffic collision.

It was reported that the Tameside Countryside Estates Team had installed a new gate into the Wood Yard after the old one had become rotten and difficult to open. Members of the Werneth Low Environment Group had renovated two of the notice boards on site (near Quarry car park and at Lower Higham car park), replacing rotten wood and adding new Perspex to allow visitors to see the information more clearly, which was currently being updated for 2023.

Following on from reports at the previous meeting, the rabbit population remained high and continued to be a problem as they had damaged the ground on site by undermining paths, fence posts and creating holes that could cause trips and falls. Regular site visits had identified these issues and it was planned to fill them with soil, which would be taken from elsewhere on site to maintain the PH balance of the soil. There had been a few dead badgers reported on site. The

Greenspace Development Officer had worked with South Manchester Badger Group representatives to ensure they were examined to try and determine the cause of death to rule out the cruel actions of badger baiters. It had been confirmed that all deaths had been due to road traffic incidents.

Litter and Fly tipping incidents remained high with hotspots located at Quarry car park, Windy Harbour and along the road past the masts towards the golf course. The Greenspace Officer had responded to these where practicable. All Fly tipping incidents were investigated if evidence was found and the Council Street Cleansing and Fly Tipping teams supported with the clear up.

Members of the Joint Management Committee were informed that costs had been obtained from the Council's Estates Team for repairs to the section of footpath from the top of Cow Lane onto the Cenotaph. The work would be phased and would then continue down the field line. It was essential to control the flow of water to ensure these repairs were successful and therefore a new drainage ditch would need to be constructed. The Greenspace Development Manager advised that the costs of the work would be £18,000 and were seeking a contribution of 50% (£9,000) from the Hyde War Memorial Trust (HWMT) as it was on their land. Trust representatives stated that an accessible path was required from Cow Lane to the Cenotaph and they felt assured that the work would be carried out by the Council. A request was made for a project plan to be provided in order to share with other members of the Trust. This would also help to manage public expectations and provide an explanation for vehicles being on site so that dog walkers were aware. In response to questions, it was confirmed that works could begin within the coming weeks once the Trust had agreed their financial contribution for the work.

With regards to Public Events, the Committee were informed that two dates had been agreed with The Cheshire Dry Stone Walling Association (13-14 May and 9-10 September 2023) to run courses in the country park. More stone would need to be delivered to site, which the Association were currently investigating and the Chair provided an update on the current position. The Greenspace Development Officer advised that the delivery to site would need to be carefully managed due to the potential of nesting skylarks, therefore a different access point may be required.

The 'Tour de Manc' would return to Werneth Low on 30 April 2023 with an official drinks station being sited at the Hare and Hounds car park from 7.30am with support from colleagues in Culture Services and the Right of Way officer. Greenspace volunteers would also be in attendance to assist in welcoming visitors and handing out refreshments. A variety of filming requests had been received with two requests (one for a Channel 4 documentary and one for an ITV weather report) currently being considered. The Council's webpages relating to Werneth Low were in the process of being updated and a page relating to the visitor centre, which contained inaccurate information, had been removed.

With regards to the Lower Higham Visitor Centre, it was noted that the café continued to operate every Sunday and was run by volunteers from HWMT along with supporting other events. Feedback from visitors had been extremely positive with a recurrent theme for it to be open on more days.

The Werneth Low Country Park Greenspace Volunteer Service continued to take place every Tuesday completing various essential tasks around the site with weekly litter picking. Examples of completed works were appended to the report and included a hazel coppice at Mousefields; removal of trees on the Heathland on Hacking Knife; removal of a den near the pond by the Cenotaph; clearing the site of fireworks and other festivity debris; clearing ditches at Baron Fields and by the side of the riding track; weekly maintenance in the formal gardens and orchard; and dry stone wall repairs.

The number of volunteers remained high with an average of 11 volunteers attending each week. Volunteers enjoyed a Christmas celebration in the wood yard and a walk. Hedge laying along the field boundary near the masts had been completed and the remainder of the 'brashings' would be

removed from the fields in the coming weeks. Hedge laying would continue along the riding track from Higham Cottages outside of the volunteering days.

Trust representatives advised that two local Neighbourhood Watch Groups had recently undertaken a litter pick at the Queen's Triangle and had filled 40 bin bags of litter. They planned to call a meeting in an attempt to address the problem, as it was believed to be due to vehicles parking along Werneth Road on the way to Greave that left litter behind. It was reported that a bulge on the retaining wall at the entrance to the car park had been observed. The Trust intended to consult The Cheshire Dry Stone Walling Association on the extent of the risk and to ask to be signposted to possible contractors to fix the wall.

Trust representatives notified the Joint Management Committee that the Dogs Trust had been invited to site and would bring information on responsible dog ownership that would be prominently displayed within the visitors centre. It was important to raise awareness of the rare birds on site and the impact loose dogs had on farming. There was a lack of signage within the country park and the Trust would look into viable options to rectify this. A suggestion was made for more involvement by children and potentially hosting an event in the country park aimed at that cohort. The Greenspace Development Manager advised that a funding stream was available that community groups could apply for to encourage more people to utilise the Borough's green spaces. The funding could be used by groups to host an event or commission a specialised company to run the event.

Trust representatives requested an update on the Joint Management Agreement. The Greenspace Development Manager advised that they would arrange a meeting of the working group in the coming weeks and that the Joint Management Agreement would be a standing item on future agendas.

The Chair provided an update on the work of HWMT and advised that a governance review was now underway. Safeguarding training was a priority and all trustees would be subject to an enhanced DBS check. The 5-year Environment Strategy was under development with an aim to match aspirations to the Council's management plan in order to complement one another. Negotiations on the farm tenancy agreement, which expired at the end of the year, had commenced. The Trust had submitted an objection to a phone mast on land that belonged to the Trust which was currently on a long term lease to the Scouts.

It was reported that the café continued to do well and the Trustees were very pleased with the positive feedback it had received. Footfall remained high and was rising and it was utilised by the community, including a high proportion of families. It was a challenge to keep it staffed with volunteers but due to its success, the possibility of extending opening hours and / or days would be explored. Work needed to be carried out and a request for a copy of the full structural survey, that was undertaken in August 2022, to be made available to the Trust if possible.

In conclusion, it was reported that discussions had taken place with Tameside Historical Society and the Council's Cultural Service regarding the archives with a view to make them more imaginative and interactive. An exciting discovery had been made of a potential 711th man, who made the ultimate sacrifice in the First World War, who originated from Hyde but served in a regiment in Liverpool. He was commemorated in Liverpool but the Trust would like him to be added to their records. The information needed to be validated and an update would be provided in due course.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the updates be noted;**
- (ii) That the Trust representatives discuss the proposed footpath works with their fellow Trustees and confirm to the Greenspace Development Manager their financial contribution at their earliest possible convenience;**
- (iii) That the Greenspace Development Manager make arrangements for a project plan to be created of the proposed footpath works and share this with the Trust;**

- (iv) That the Greenspace Development Manager make arrangements for a meeting of the working group to discuss the Joint Management Agreement;**
- (v) That the Joint Management Agreement be a standing item on future agendas;**
- (vi) That an update report from the Hyde War Memorial Trust be a standing item on future agendas; and**
- (vii) That a copy of the full structural survey, that was undertaken in August 2022, be made available to the Trust if possible.**

11. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

RESOLVED:

That the Joint Management Committee meets as follows:-

- 14 June 2023**
- 11 October 2023**
- 21 February 2024**

Agenda Item 6.

Report To:	WERNETH LOW COUNTRY PARK JOINT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
Date:	14 June 2023
Reporting Officer:	Nicola Marshall - Greenspace Development Manager
Subject:	WERNETH LOW COUNTRY PARK JOINT MANAGEMENT AGREEMENT
Report Summary:	To inform Members of progress towards the signing of a new Joint Management Agreement.
Recommendations:	That the report be noted.
Links to Community Strategy:	To ensure that the Country Park is an attractive and environmentally friendly place to visit.
Policy Implications:	The activities in the Country Park are in accordance with Council policy priorities.
Financial Implications: (Authorised by the Section 151 Officer and Chief Finance Officer)	The funding for the projects is met by the Operations and Greenspace revenue budget.
Legal Implications: (Authorised by the Borough Solicitor)	It is important that the Joint Management Committee is kept informed of activities undertaken in the Country Park.
Risk Management:	Activities in the Country Park are kept under review in order to ensure any potential risks are dealt with adequately.
Access to Information:	Background papers and information can be obtained by contacting Nicola Marshall, Greenspace Development Manager

 phone: 07814 541623

 e-mail: nicola.marshall@tameside.gov.uk

1. WERNETH LOW COUNTRY PARK JOINT MANAGEMENT AGREEMENT

- 1.1 Both the Council and the Trust acknowledge that it is an appropriate time to review the Joint Management Agreement.
- 1.2 Two previous Working Group meetings were held, however these ceased at the start of the pandemic in 2020 as people had other priorities. In the meantime the previous Greenspace Officer, who was also a private tenant of the Trust, retired and left the Trust's residential accommodation.
- 1.3 Both parties had agreed that they wanted to enter into a new Joint Agreement and that the general principles of wanting to maintain a country park were still important to all concerned.
- 1.4 Since the initial meetings there have been changes in the membership of the Hyde War Memorial Trust so it was agreed at the February 2023 meeting that a new Joint Management Agreement Working Group would be established.
- 1.5 The membership of the Working Group was to comprise of Trustees from Hyde War Memorial Trust and elected Councillors. The Greenspace Manager would support the meeting by providing background papers.
- 1.6 The Working Group met on Friday 10 March 2023. The Greenspace Manager shared a draft copy of a revised Joint Agreement. She explained the background to the revised Agreement and ran through the changes to the existing Agreement.
- 1.7 Subsequently the draft Joint Agreement was shared with the Chair of Hyde War Memorial Trust and it was discussed at a Trust Meeting.
- 1.8 Hyde War Memorial Trust have now instructed their legal team to assess the Agreement and work with Legal Services at Tameside Council to finalise the Agreement.
- 1.9 A further update on progress will be provided at the October Joint Management Committee meeting.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 As set out at the front of the report.

Agenda Item 7.

Report To:	WERNETH LOW COUNTRY PARK JOINT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
Date:	14 June 2023
Reporting Officer:	Emma Varnam - Assistant Director, Operations and Neighbourhoods
Subject:	GREENSPACE DEVELOPMENT OFFICER'S REPORT
Report Summary:	To inform Members of activities undertaken within the Country Park since the last meeting of the Joint Management Committee (22 February 2023).
Recommendations:	That the report be noted.
Links to Community Strategy:	To ensure that the Country Park is an attractive and environmentally friendly place to visit.
Policy Implications:	The activities in the Country Park are in accordance with Council policy priorities.
Financial Implications: (Authorised by the Section 151 Officer and Chief Finance Officer)	The funding for the projects is met by the Operations and Greenspace revenue budget.
Legal Implications: (Authorised by the Borough Solicitor)	It is important that the Joint Management Committee is kept informed of activities undertaken in the Country Park.
Risk Management:	Activities in the Country Park are kept under review in order to ensure any potential risks are dealt with adequately.
Access to Information:	Background papers and information can be obtained by contacting Katie Lowry, Greenspace Development Officer,  phone: 07519 617 515  e-mail: katie.lowry@tameside.gov.uk

1. MAINTENANCE OF SITES

- 1.1 During March and April 2023 the Tameside Countryside Estates Team completed the path works (phase 1) on site, which saw improvements to drainage and surfacing from the top of Cow Lane up to the Cenotaph. This allows pedestrians an opportunity to walk on a surfaced path from the Visitors Centre Car Park up to the Cenotaph, whilst keeping the track wide enough to accommodate vehicles when needed. The work has been joint funded by the Hyde War Memorial Trust (HWMT) and Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council (TMBC).
- 1.2 The Greenspace Development Officer has been completing a review of the Werneth Low Management Plan, which will set out how the site will be managed from 2023 to 2028. Officers will circulate a draft version for comments by the Joint Committee prior to consultation with other groups such as the Volunteers and Werneth Low Environment Group.
- 1.3 A full site inspection was carried out in April 2023 by the TMBC Greenspace Development Officer, the report is then shared with the Greenspace Development Manager and actions are prioritised and planned. A further full inspection takes place in October each year.
- 1.4 A full review of the site signage was carried out by Greenspace Volunteers John Jones and Ray Knowles with John reproducing a map of the site and a full list of repairs needed. Where possible these repairs were immediately put into action and others that need new signs on the router will be completed as soon as possible.
- 1.5 The hazel coppicing project at Mousefields, which was started in Winter 2022 has had more work completed with the addition of some rabbit guards around the coppiced stools to help and protect the re-growth from predation.
- 1.6 As part of the Greenspace Conservation days we have completed a pond renovation project at the edge of Great Stone Low and New Piece. This area is suffering with an invasion of Himalayan Balsam, which last season we were struggling to get to due to the low tree branches and bramble invading this area. In addition this seasonal pond (holding water usually only in the winter months) was over grown and unmanaged. Unless ponds are managed appropriately they will soon revert to scrub. We therefore coppiced the willows in this area to prevent them draining too much of the water in the growing season, created a 'dead-hedge' using the smaller branches around the area, acting as a barrier with excellent nesting and habitat opportunities. The logs were removed off site to prevent them taking root on the damp ground. We are now removing the Himalayan Balsam hoping to rid this area of it entirely in future years, last year it did jump the wall into the neighbouring New Piece field and our focus is to prevent any further encroachment of this invasive plant on site.
- 1.7 The Grass cutting season has started with TMBC Grounds Maintenance Teams completing grass cutting on our formal areas such as the Orchard, around the Visitors Centre Car Park and picnic areas on the site. The entrance to Beacon Lane Picnic Area has been widened by the Greenspace Volunteers to enable the larger mower to access the site so this area can be cut again this year.
- 1.8 Litter and Fly tipping incidents are still an issue with items dumped at Windy Harbour including two lots of Christmas Trees in April, dumped bags of growing materials and a whole garden fence, upvc windows etc. Volunteers from the local community along with Greenspace Volunteers regularly litter pick the site and we are always grateful for their time and efforts. The Greenspace Officer responds to Fly tipping incidents where practicable. All Fly tipping incidents are investigated if evidence is found and support is received where needed with the clear up through TMBC Street Cleansing and Fly Tipping teams.

- 1.9 After the snow on the 10 March we had a very near miss with a tree and a house at the end of Arnold Ave where the very top of a spruce tree snapped off and ended up in the garden, thankfully missing the house, decking and fencing. Thanks to the TMBC Estates Team for quickly removing the tree from the garden and felling the tree to ensure it is safe. The Greenspace Volunteers then made habitat piles with the logs and branches.

2. PUBLIC EVENTS

- 2.1 The Cheshire Dry Stone Walling Association (DSWA) ran a two day course over the weekend of 13-14 May 2023 with excellent weather. Another stretch of the wall along the riding track, between New Piece and Rough Moor, was completed to the usual high standard. One of the trainees on the course this time was one of our newer volunteer recruits who thoroughly enjoyed the course and will be putting his new skills into practice when needed on the Low. The fee for this course was funded by the TMBC Greenspace Volunteer budget. New stone was needed for the course. We agreed a route for a local farmer to deliver to site using the tracks from Werneth Low Road, therefore preventing any potential damage to New Piece and nesting birds on site. As usual the riding track was closed for the weekend to ensure safety. Many thanks to the Cheshire DSWA for organising the course and ensuring such high standards of work and work practices. The next course will be delivered on the weekend of 9-10 September 2023, posters for which are being displayed on site.
- 2.2 The Tour de Manc returned to Werneth Low again on the 30 April 2023 with cyclists from across the country take part in the circular route around Greater Manchester. Refreshments were on offer to the participants after the climb up Cowlshaw Brow and thanks to our Greenspace Volunteers for making the visitors feel welcome and making the site look great with flowers and decorations.
- 2.3 HWMT are making preparations for this year's Peace Day celebrations on the 25 June 2023. Greenspace staff and volunteers will be available to help with logistics on the day.
- 2.4 The Werneth Low Environment Group arranged a meeting with Adam Linnet from Cheshire Wildlife Trust on Monday 22 May to explore project possibilities, especially renovating some of the ponds on site and wildflower seed collection from the meadows. This is in the very early stages but we look forward to receiving more information from the group in due course and how we can work together to make some of the ideas a reality on the ground.

3. THE LOWER HIGHAM VISITOR CENTRE

- 3.1 Officers note that the café is now operating every Sunday run by Volunteers from HWMT along with supporting other events and has received great feedback from site users.

4. WERNETH LOW COUNTRY PARK GREENSPACE VOLUNTEER SERVICE

- 4.1 The Greenspace Volunteers have continued to meet every Tuesday 10am till 3pm since the last report, completing various essential tasks around the site and weekly litter picking. Examples of the work completed can be found in **Appendix 1**. We have continued to use the tool stores and Garage as shelter and storage, which has been working well.
- 4.2 A Volunteer Questionnaire was circulated that we will now use once a year to enable everyone to have a say on the work we complete and how the day is run etc. Officers are grateful to everyone for their responses and of course, their continued hard work on site making it better for both people and wildlife.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 As set out at the front of the report.

APPENDIX 1

Project Ref	Location	Task	Completed
1	Mousefields	Hazel Coppice- Added chicken wire around stools to prevent too much predation of the new regrowth.	Ongoing as time and resources allow.
2	Edge of Great Stone Low/ New Piece	Pond renovation project- as previously described above.	March
3	Stansfield Meadow- next to church yard	Hedge cutting- keeping this hedge trimmed to maintain a formal shape and keep good relations with our neighbours at the church.	February
4	Higham Lane- from Higher Higham up.	Hedge cutting- field side- this hedge was laid two years ago so was now due for cutting to help bulk up the growth within the hedge and make it a better habitat for nesting birds etc.	March
5	Windy Harbour slope	Before the new growth set in we had a big litter pick on this slope which is steep and too difficult to access in the summer- 11 bags of rubbish were collected, mainly drinks cans and bottles etc.	March
6	View finders	Paint had been spread across both of the view finders- this was cleaned with graffiti remover.	April
7	Formal gardens and Orchard	Weekly maintenance.	Weekly
8	Higham Cottages Riding Track, Windy Harbour, Baron Fields and the small renovated pond	Himalayan Balsam removal. The excellent weather in recent weeks has spurred on the growth of everything, including the Balsam. We have seen a real improvement to the amount at the bottom of Baron fields thanks to efforts last year and we will focus again on preventing it taking over new areas e.g. jumping over the riding track at Higham cottages into the heath.	End of April- May, ongoing through the Summer until seeding.
8	Werneth Low Road and various	Dry Stone walling repairs, small and larger repairs needed through vandalism on site.	March and April
9	Calf Hey Woods	Repairs to fencing and improvements to gate with wire netting added to prevent access to this sensitive area of the site.	May
10	Windy Harbour/Cock Brow grassed area	We had had several reports of people parking on this grass and setting fires and bbqs which is not allowed on site. The Greenspace Volunteers have dug out the ditch and built up a bund to try and prevent people parking on the grass and causing damage. If this doesn't work we will look at adding some posts onto the grass.	May
11	On entrance to Pipers Clough	Culvert needed digging out to prevent flooding to riding tracks causing erosion.	Ongoing
12	Visitors Centre Car Park	Weekly litter pick, signs cleaned and driveway drainage maintained to keep clear.	Weekly

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